



THE MYSTERY OF JESUS CHRIST

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Course Description

The course is an introduction to contemporary Catholic Christology. The approach is that of a “christology from below.” That is, after an initial consideration of some fundamental theological concepts that set a framework for our inquiry, we proceed to examine Jesus Christ as an *historical* figure and object of Christian *faith*. The course pivots around Jesus’ proclamation of the “Kingdom of God” and treats his history through his Resurrection and the sending of his Spirit. Finally, briefly, we will go into the development of New Testament Christologies.

Texts (*Books & Readings in parenthesis are optional*)

Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*. New York: Paulist, 1977

(Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth*, Doubleday, 2007)

A packet of copied materials from:

Francis Smith, S.J. *The God Question*, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988

Francis Smith, S.J. *The World is Charged*: New York, Herder/Crossroads, 2003

Also useful:

The Church’s Confession of Faith: a Catholic Catechism for Adults, San Francisco: Ignatius/Communio, 1987 (“The German Catechism”)

Fitzmyer, Joseph. *A Christological Catechism*. New York, Paulist, revised 1991

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 3, “Jesus Christ” (B.F. Meyer)

The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, “Jesus” (John Meier)

Brown, Raymond. *An Introduction to New Testament Christology*. New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1994

3. JESUS IN HIS JEWISH CONTEXT

Readings: Smith, "Jesus: His Historical-Theological Context" (xerox)
"Israel in the Time of Jesus" (xerox)
(Ratzinger, 9-24, 25-45)

4. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS:

(A) THE CENTRAL THEME OF HIS PREACHING:
THE REIGN OF GOD

Readings: Smith, "The Reign of God in the Preaching and Acts of Jesus of
Nazareth" 1-11 (xerox)

(B) THE REIGN OF GOD IN THE ACTS OF JESUS

Readings: Smith, "The Reign of God in the Preaching and Acts of Jesus of
Nazareth" 11-23 (xerox)
Kasper, 89-99
("German Catechism" 129-138)

5. TWO RELATED QUESTIONS: THE ORIGIN OF JESUS AND THE AIM OF
JESUS

(A) THE ORIGIN OF JESUS

Readings: Kasper, 65-66
"Letter on the Virgin Birth" (handout)
("German Catechism" 139-152)
Smith, "The Infancy Narrative and the Question of Jesus' Origins"
(xerox)

(B) THE AIM OF JESUS AND EXPECTATION OF JESUS

Readings: Smith, "The Aim of Jesus" (xerox)
(Ratzinger, 64-127, 128-168, 169-182, 183-217)

6. JESUS' RELATION TO THE COMING OF THE REIGN OF GOD

Readings: Smith, "Jesus' Relation to the Coming of the Reign of God"
(xerox)
Kasper, 100-112
(Ratzinger, 218-286)

7. THE REIGN OF GOD AND THE DEATH OF JESUS

Readings: Kasper, 113-123
Smith, "The Death of Jesus" (xerox)
(Ratzinger, 287-318, 319-355)
(German Catechism, 153-163)

8. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Readings: Kasper, 124-160
Smith, "The Resurrection of Jesus" (xerox)
(German Catechism, 165-180)

9. THE SENDING OF THE SPIRIT TO THE RISEN CHRIST

Readings: Smith, "The Trinity as the Summary of the Christian Answer to the
(Reign of) God Question" (xerox)

10. THE CHRISTOLOGIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Readings: Kasper, 163-174
Smith, "The Emergence of the Christologies of the New
Testament" (xerox)

PMIN 203
The Mystery of Jesus Christ

Assignment 1

A three-page (or four, if you need it) paper. This paper will be due on October 19th.

On the basis of your own experience, discuss:

The Question Jesus Christ Answers

The meaning of the topic:

Kasper says (p. 41): “The confession that ‘Jesus is the Christ’ is the answer to the question of salvation and redemption.”

Centuries have passed. People have changed. Yet millions of people still believe that Jesus Christ is the answer to the most fundamental question that their lives pose.

How would you phrase that question? To what “ultimate concern(s)” of your does he offer an answer?

Are your concerns peculiar to you? Can they be generalized, i.e. do you think they are widespread concerns? Are there elements in our present situation that incline us to ask the question about Christ in a different way than before?

PMIN 203
The Mystery of Jesus Christ

Assignment 2

An eight-ten page paper. This paper will be due by December 16th.

Topic: Jesus' Understanding of the Kingdom of God

Using Smith, Kasper, Ratzinger, and your own reflections, discuss the understanding Jesus had of the Kingdom of God as revealed in

1. His words
2. His actions
3. His “program” (aim, goal, hope)
4. How he viewed his death

As a summary discuss the following questions:

1. Was the Kingdom a future or present reality or both?
2. Was it in any way a political/social reality or religious or both?
3. Was it an act of God, an act of man, or both?
4. Was it an event in history, or an awakening to the transcendental (always and everywhere) situation of men and women before God, or both?
5. Would Jesus have said as he died, “Thy Kingdom come,” “Thy Kingdom has come” or both?

(Test Question)

Everyone has his or her own insights into what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God, but in the readings and discussion we tried to explore the relationship of Jesus' preaching of “The Reign of God” and the central Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Explore the theme: “The doctrine of the Trinity has traditionally been expressed in a static way. Seen dynamically, would the doctrine of the Trinity shed light on what the ‘Reign of God’ turned out to be?”